

Vance, Christopher

TV Interviews on Iran and Afghanistan



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Following are interviews of Secretary Vance in Washington, D.C., by Tom Brokaw and Richard Valeriani on NBC's "Today" Show, January 11, 1980, and of Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher by George Herman, CBS News; Marvin Kalb, CBS News; and Henry Trehwitt, Baltimore Sun, on CBS's "Face the Nation" in Washington, D.C., January 6.

SECRETARY VANCE'S INTERVIEW

Q. What other measures is the Administration planning to take in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?

A. We are not planning, at this point, to take any other measures. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union crossed a new threshold and it required a very strong and a very resolute response. That response was given by President Carter in the speech which he made.

We have two purposes in the actions which we have taken. First, to make it very clear to the Soviet Union that they will continue to pay a heavy price as long as their troops remain in Afghanistan. And secondly, to make sure that they understand that aggression will be faced up to whenever it occurs. It's too early to say at this point what the long-range effect is going to be on the U.S.-Soviet relationship. That depends upon Moscow and actions which will be taken in Moscow.

I do want to make a point, which I think is a very important point to make.

And that is that the invasion of Afghanistan underscores the importance of pursuing the policies which we have been embarked upon. What are those policies? Let me outline them for you very briefly.

- Continuing to strengthen America—we have been in the process of doing that during the past 3 years through a wide variety of steps in the strategic fields and the field of theater nuclear weapons and in the field of conventional weapons as well. That will continue.

- Secondly, we will continue to play an active diplomatic role throughout the world, taking the kind of actions such as we have taken in the past to help preserve the peace in the Middle East and in southern Africa.

- We will also continue to play an active role in the Third World, dealing with Third World problems on Third World basis, and not trying to impose solutions from the outside, from external forces.

- In addition to that, we will continue to pursue an active policy in terms of democratization and the support and protection of human rights throughout the world, and will continue to pursue our policy of seeking mutual and balanced arms control progress wherever necessary.

Q. Getting back to Afghanistan, would the United States consider helping the Afghan insurgents?

A. The question of what happens internally is a question I'd prefer not to get into.

Q. As you know, the Administration has drawn considerable criticism over some of the measures it's taken: the withholding of the sale of grain and advanced technology to the Soviet Union. And the question is, why should the American farmer, why should the American businessman pay the price that you're talking about?

A. I think it's very important, as I indicated earlier, that we take firm, clear, and resolute action. And this required steps across the board. We took not only action in the field of cutting back on the grain shipments in a very substantial way but also steps in denying to the Soviet Union high technology. And another major area was cutting back on the fish allocations so that it would be no longer any fish allocations to the Soviet Union in the future.

These kinds of strong steps were necessary. And all of us are going to have to share in the sacrifices that are necessary to make this demonstrated stand to reflect the view which we hold about the importance of the principles which are involved here.

Q. How long will these measures remain in effect? And I ask that in light of what happened with the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968. Six months, a year later, we were back doing business as usual.

A. They will remain in effect as long as is necessary. And I believe it will be a protracted period. That may not be the case. That would be fortunate if that were the case. But I do not believe that is the case. We must assume it will be for a protracted period.

You're absolutely right. When you look back at what took place at the time of the Hungarianization, that was soon forgotten in a period of weeks. The same thing was true in the case of Czechoslovakia. The Soviets must understand that this will not be a passing thing, that aggression will not be rewarded.

Q. What about the economic reprisals that we've taken thus far? Aren't they largely symbolic? There's a wide body of opinion that they really will have no effect on the Russian quality of life or certainly on the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, that they were done primarily to make us feel better and to send up some kind of a signal; but it's really no more than a signal.

A. No, I would respectfully disagree very strongly with you. The steps taken insofar as grain are concerned are going to have, in our judgment, a major impact on the livestock program in the Soviet Union. The denial of grain to them is going to require a sharp cutback in livestock production. This is a very important program to the Soviets, and it's had the strong backing of Mr. Brezhnev. The denial of high technology is something which is also of great importance and has been for many years. Therefore, I think that that will have a substantial impact. The cutting back in the fish allocations is of lesser importance but, again, an important step.

Q. What about the Olympic games? Vice President Mondale is now suggesting that they be moved to Canada. Is that the official Administration policy?

A. The official policy was stated by the President at the time that he made his speech. At that time he said that we prefer the games would go forward, but that we would have to watch and see what happens, and he would make his decision in the future, after seeing how the situation develops in terms of what the Soviets would now do.

Q. —take the Olympic Games out of Moscow is something that would probably really hurt the Russians. Is there much sympathy for that among our allies, other Western countries, Third World countries?

A. It's mixed.

Q. Is that something you're going to push?

A. We are going to watch and see what happens. It remains a possibility which may be exercised.

Q. Let me ask you about Iran now. Do you expect the Soviet Union to veto the Security Council resolution against sanctions?

A. I don't know. It remains a real possibility. As you know, we'll probably vote on the sanctions issue either tonight at the United Nations or tomorrow morning. I believe that the vote will be a positive vote, but the Soviet Union may veto.

Q. What will you do if there's a veto?

A. We will go ahead and take action as if the sanctions had indeed been put into effect.

Q. Would you consider a naval blockade to back it up?

A. I do not rule it out.

Q. What if the Soviets begin to move out of Afghanistan and toward the warm-water ports of the Persian Gulf, as a lot of people are speculating that they may. Does that mean that we have to begin to move troops to that area?

A. I do not want to speculate on events which are not facing us at this time. We'll deal with them when we have to cross that bridge.

MR. CHRISTOPHER'S INTERVIEW

Q. I think the question that almost every American is asking himself or herself today, reading the headlines about Soviet denunciations of President Carter and American sanctions, if you like, against the Soviet Union, is are we now embarking on a second cold war?

A. I don't think it is very helpful to use terms like that. We are in a period of making a strong response to what we regard as an extraordinary event. You have to consider the degree of the aggression of the Soviet Union into Afghanistan. They go in with 50,000 troops, they are involved in wiping out the head of the country, they install a puppet regime, they are bearing down on the Moslem minority. This is the kind of an event that calls for the strong response that President Carter has made.

We will have to see in the future how U.S.-Soviet relations work out. I don't think it is time to pronounce the death of detente, but I think we need to deal with an important and serious reality for America.

Q. In your first answer, you said we will have to wait and see in the future what our relations with the Soviet Union are going to be. That sort of brings to mind the idea that you feel it is a temporary situation—this crisis over Afghanistan. If we have this embargo on grain and all these other things afoot, what will it take on the Soviet Union's part to end it? What is the minimum Soviet action which will stop this threat of a second cold war?

A. Let me respond to that by telling you what our goals are. We are determined to show the Soviet Union that

their aggression into Afghanistan is not without considerable cost to them. We are also determined to make it clear to them that any subsequent event of the same kind will be subject to very severe penalties.

Now, if we can make those points, then the Soviet response will, I think, determine what our relationship will be with them in the future.

Q. Isn't there some danger, however, that if you simply withdraw these sanctions after the Soviet Union has consolidated its position in Afghanistan, that you will be seen in something of the ambivalent position you have in the past as with the combat brigade in Cuba, that sort of thing?

A. We don't intend to set any time for withdrawing the sanctions. I think one of the lessons coming out of the Czechoslovakia crisis is that the response needs to be determined and of considerable duration. When I was in Europe last week, I was struck by the number of officials there who had gone through the Czech crisis and who regretted the fact that their response was of such short duration. I think we need to be determined and persistent here.

Q. Could you—pointing out this West European possible allied response—could you point out for us what you expect, what you have worked out with the European allies?

A. We are in the early stages of that. But there are a number of things we do expect. First, we expect our allies will not move in to supply the grain that we are denying to the Soviet Union.

Q. That is Canada, Australia, Argentina.

A. That is Canada, Australia, and any of the other European countries which may have some grain stocks which could be substituted for ours.

Second, I think we expect them to terminate their aid programs for Afghanistan. It is one thing to aid a nonaligned country; it is quite another thing to aid a puppet regime of the Soviet Union.

We expect them to take some action with respect to their diplomatic representation. We also expect them to take actions which are somewhat parallel to ours in the economic field. Every country will have to do what it can do best. For example, I would expect some of the

countries there to deny export credits that they have been giving in the past.

Now we are in the early stages of working through this kind of a response. The United States took a long step when President Carter announced his program on last Friday; the NATO group will be meeting this week to consider what actions they will take in response. In my meetings with our NATO allies, I am sure that they are as concerned about this action of the Soviet Union as we are, and I expect their response to be determined and firm.

Q. What about the French? There have been reports that the French really don't see it quite the same way that the United States does.

A. I will have to see it as that develops. In the comparable situation in Iran, France has been very supportive of the United States, and I didn't see any difference in talking with my French colleague as to his analysis of the gravity of the Soviet step. Everyone recognizes that it is a new departure in Soviet policy.

Q. The American position regarding the Olympic games is unclear to me. Now I see the Saudis have withdrawn from the games next summer. What is the United States really recommending in that regard? Are you considering withdrawing support of the games, recommending voluntary non-participation by Americans? What is the American position?

A. First let me comment on the Saudi reaction which I think is very interesting here. We have a leading Moslem country feeling so strongly about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that they are pulling out of the Olympic games.

Our position is the one stated by President Carter on Friday night. We would much prefer to be able to go to the Olympic games, but the aggressive behavior of the Soviet Union puts at some risk both the athletes and the fact that individuals will be going to the Soviet Union. So we have not reached a decision on that subject. It is under review and will continue to be.

Q. On the question of SALT, which is of interest to a lot of people, the Administration tried so hard to complete the process of negotiating SALT. You went to the Congress, held up in the Senate Afghanistan, and suddenly you are pulling back and shelving it for the time being. At the same time, it is made very clear that we are going to abide by

the terms of the treaty as it was negotiated and it seems why the ratification process, in a sense? But why stick with the terms?

A. Under international law, a country is obligated to stick to the terms of a treaty that has been negotiated and which is in the process of ratification. We intend to do that for our part. But we also intend to keep our eye on the Soviet Union, and if we find some deviation from the terms of SALT II on their part, then, of course, we will be in quite a different position ourselves.

Q. Listening to your answers earlier to what our intentions were on this Soviet-Afghanistan incursion or invasion, you said we wanted to show that such an action was not without cost to them, that it would incur very severe penalties.

It sounds—now correct me if I am not getting the diplomatic language exactly right—it sounds as though what this means is you do not expect our actions to roll back the Soviet action, you just are trying to say that any future actions of this kind will be expensive.

A. No. We hope both.

Q. Realistically?

A. We hope both. We hope that they will roll back their actions in Afghanistan, and we hope to make the point that any consequent actions of that same kind will incur very heavy penalties.

Q. You also said—I just am trying to clear up a few loose ends on this very opening point, I asked about the cold war. You said it is too early to call it that, yet you quoted various diplomats who regretted our response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was so brief, and it sounds to me a little bit as though you are hinting that our reaction at this time, or displeasure, should be longer.

A. I would not think our reaction will be a brief one this time. I don't expect to go back to business as usual with the Soviet Union for some time to come. We have taken severe actions in this country. It will result in a loss to the Soviet Union of 17 million tons of grain this year, 360,000 tons of fish, a good deal of high technology. Those are strong actions. We intend to carry them out for

long enough so that the Soviet Union incurs some cost for this really quite unprecedented action that they have taken in moving into Afghanistan.

Q. I wonder if I could get into this area. Did you have intelligence before the Russians moved in that they would do such a thing?

A. We knew that there was a buildup across the border of Soviet troops. And we have been warning, backgrounding, talking about this prospect for some time. But until they flew in the 250 planes in a 30-hour period, of course, we didn't know that they were going to do that. Indeed, there had been some signs that they were going to shore up the Amin regime, but when they flew in the 250 planes, when they went across the border with two divisions, then, of course, we had an entirely new situation on our hands.

Q. What I am trying to get at really—that suggests surprise by the dimension of the Soviet action, the boldness of it. What about our intelligence? There has been a problem with that in the past, expressed by the President himself concerning Iran, and I am wondering if the same problem is not manifest here. In talking to your colleagues, I find that they were taken quite by surprise by the boldness of this Soviet action. Isn't that in itself worse?

A. I think we ought to recognize that this is the first time since World War II that the Soviet Union has used its troops outside the Warsaw bloc. Now the very audacity of that move is one that caused us to be taken aback. We didn't think the Soviet Union would take such a great risk, and, having taken it, I think we are determined to respond in a way that is commensurate with the risk.

Q. That leads directly to the question of why they were willing to take that risk. Do you think they felt that the United States had become, in order to borrow a phrase from the past, "a pitiful, helpless giant" and simply would not react in a substantive way?

A. It is very hard to speculate about Soviet intentions. I do not think we are a weak or pitiful giant in any respect. As a matter of fact, I think our country's military posture is a good deal stronger than it was when we came into office 3 years ago with the strengthening of NATO, with the cruise missile, and the other defense steps that we have taken.

There are a number of reasons why the Soviet Union might have done what

they did. They might be in Afghanistan for a specific reason, or there might be reasons that extend beyond.

Q. Which is it?

A. I don't think anybody knows at the present time, but I think the United States has to be ready for either one of the alternatives.

Q. —put it the other day in terms of the steppingstone. He said the Afghan action was a steppingstone toward some broader strategic aim.

A. I think we believe it could be a steppingstone to some broader aim, perhaps to their historic interest in a warm water port, perhaps to their interest in oil.

Q. Do you see this as an effort by perhaps a new group within the Kremlin, a new hard faction? There are some of your intelligence people who talk about the rise once again of Mikhail Suslov to greater prominence in the Politburo. Is this possible to explain what the Russians have done?

A. I wouldn't want to get into factions. This was an action taken by the Soviet Government. They have the responsibility for it. I wouldn't want to get into a good-guys, bad-guys situation within the Soviet Government. They are responsible as a government.

Q. That leads in turn again to the question about their objectives in Pakistan, which is a neighbor that clearly feels threatened. How far is the United States prepared to go in setting aside its concern over the development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan in order to help the Pakistanis rearm?

A. We retain our concern over the development of nuclear weapons there. Our nuclear nonproliferation policy is one of our important policies. On the other hand, it is only one of the tenets of our foreign policy. This is an exceptional situation and we will be prepared to help the [Pakistanis] in this exceptional situation if they do desire.

Q. Do they so desire? Are you in communication with them on this?

A. We are in communication with them and I think the next week or two will give us an opportunity to indicate how we and to what extent we will be helpful to the [Pakistanis].

Q. Would you have to balance aid to Pakistan with some kind of aid to India, or some help, something to keep from tilting as the previous Administration once said?

A. We are determined to maintain relations with India, but India ought to see the action of the Soviet Union as a threat to India as well as the other countries in the region. After all, India—

Q. Do you see signs that they do?

A. I see signs that some elements of the government do. They are in the process of an election campaign. I think we will have a fuller response for them after the campaign.

Q. I would like to ask you about China and Defense Secretary Brown's visit there. There has been speculation that the United States, while not in any sense choosing at this point to establish a military relationship with the People's Republic of China, is not beyond considering with Peking the possibility of stationing radar facilities in China to replace, for example, some of those lost in Iran. Is there that kind of halfway-house military relationship possible with the Chinese?

A. Let me say in general terms that we don't intend to let the misconduct of the Soviet Union keep us from developing a normal relationship with the People's Republic of China.

On the other hand, we have said, and we continue to maintain, that we do not intend to furnish arms or weapons to the People's Republic of China. Now Secretary Brown is there. He will be having conversations with respect to many subjects, including the new Afghan invasion by the Soviet Union, and I think that out of that will come an important indication to us as to how we can cooperate in that area. But as I say, we will not be in a military relationship of supplying arms or weapons to the People's Republic.

Q. But short of the supply of American weapons to China, will the United States try to explore with the Chinese the possibility of using Chinese territory for the basing of radar-type facilities?

A. On that subject I really wouldn't have any comment except to say that we will be discussing with them, for example, their possible aid to other countries in the region which might be threatened by the Soviet behavior.

Q. In Pakistan, for example?

A. If Pakistan desired, we would be talking to a number of countries around the world about aiding Pakistan. So I would put Pakistan in that group.

Q. Let me direct your attention to Afghanistan's other boundary. The impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been sort of peculiar in Iran. On the one hand you have the Moslems from Afghanistan invading the Soviet Embassy in Tehran; on the other hand you have the militants who hold the 50 Americans demanding three more Americans. Do you have any kind of evaluation as to what the adventure in Afghanistan is going to do to the holding of American hostages in Tehran?

A. If the people in Iran are thinking clearly about the matter, I would think that it would cause them to want to end their controversy with the United States and the obscene holding of our hostages and direct their attention to the greater threat which comes from Soviet domination of Afghanistan.

Q. But what have you seen or sensed?

A. I have some reason to think that a number of the leaders of that country sense the importance of ending the problem with the United States. How high that goes in that government is, of course, a puzzle.

Q. But there is no guarantee at all that reasonable thought has dominated the people who hold the hostages in the Embassy. Do you see any evidence whatever that the transition in the government, if that is what is happening, appreciation of strategic reality or whatever, is having an influence on the willingness of the people who are in that Embassy to release the hostages?

A. We haven't seen it yet but I have to believe that the people of that country are concerned about their own welfare, concerned about their own future, and that the combination of actions that the United States is taking—the seeking of sanctions, the condemnation of the world community, and now the threat from Afghanistan—that combination of events may bring the people of Iran, including the terrorists who hold our hostages, bring them to their senses.

Q. Is it your sense that if the Ayatollah Khomeini should give a direct order through whatever gradual process for the people in the Embassy to release those hostages, that they would do it?

A. It is my judgment that the Ayatollah could give such an order and have it carried out.

Q. You seemed to be suggesting a moment ago when you said there might be some members of the government who would like to end all of this and get on with better relationships with the United States, that these were lower ranking members. What about Khomeini who seems to have the power? Is there anything from all of your diplomatic activities and ventures over the last 9 or 10 weeks to suggest that he has changed his basic approach to this crisis?

A. No, I don't have any indication of a change in his mind. I hope one will be forthcoming.

Q. What help, what support can the American people realistically hope for from the United Nations in bringing pressure to bear on the Soviet Union over Afghanistan?

A. Well I think the fact that 50 countries have gone to the United Nations from all over the world seeking a resolution in the Security Council of condemnation against the Soviet Union is an important fact in itself. This is outcry of international opinion against this invasion that has its own importance. Beyond that, I think you can look forward perhaps to a debate in other organs of the United Nations which once again could focus world opinion, add to the costs that the Soviet Union is paying for their actions.

Q. During this and other Administrations, I think specifically of some of the statements by Ambassador Moynihan as he was then, there was a strong feeling in this country that the independent nations, the Third World, tended more to support the Soviet Union than the United States. Does this sudden end of, at least temporary end, of detente begin to push the balance in the United Nations a little more in our favor?

A. Well there have been a number of interesting indications along those lines. You know it is important to remember

that on Iran, the vote in the Security Council was 15 to nothing. The vote at the International Court of Justice in favor of the United States was 15 to nothing. The Third World countries on these two issues—both Iran and Afghanistan—are lining up behind the United States policy, and I think that is a very important change.

Q. What about the question of America being able to use not bases but military facilities in the Persian Gulf region? We have read stories about the possibility of Oman providing facilities, Kenya, Somalia. Could you tell us something about that?

A. Let me back up just a minute on that and say President Carter's speech on Friday night was primarily directed to bilateral steps that might be taken between the United States and the Soviet Union. Now in addition to that, the United States is in the process of important steps to improve its military posture in the Middle East. A carrier task force, to be operating in the Indian Ocean, building up our facilities at Diego Garcia, and in that connection we will be seeking additional facilities in those three countries to service the fleet and to give us a greater capacity, additional facilities, both ports and airfields.

Q. Could I pursue that, because perhaps even more sensitive than the three countries Mr. Kalb mentioned would be the possibilities of facilities in Egypt and Israel, both of which would be receptive to that kind of arrangement. What is the U.S. attitude on that?

A. They are under consideration as well, along with the others.

Q. There is a movement in this country now to end that old traditional thing—bipartisan foreign policy. Will the beginning of Republican and other Democratic attacks on this Administration have any impact on our ability to conduct our foreign policy and to make it stick?

A. I think the people of the United States are unified. Some of the politicians may not be at the moment. I thought it was rather strange and ironic last night that those who call out most loudly for a stronger U.S. position against the Soviet Union were criticizing the single strongest step we took—the grain embargo.

I might say in this connection that the Administration will be announcing tomorrow a major new gasohol program, one that will use the equivalent of 5 million tons of corn during the next year. This will lead, during 1980, to the production of over 500 million gallons of gasohol. Indeed, by the end of 1980 over 10% of a particular kind of gasoline will have alcohol added to it.

[Later in the week, the Administration announced a gasohol program which will seek to create, during 1981, the capacity to use 5 million tons of biomass

products, most of which will be corn, in the production of more than 500 million gallons of ethanol. This would replace about 10% of the anticipated U.S. demand for unleaded gasoline.]

This is the kind of thing that we can do to compensate for the grain and corn that is not being sold to the Soviet Union. I think it is an important development. I think our farmers would rather be growing grain to solve our energy problems than they would for the Soviet Union's herds.

Q. So you don't think that the end of bipartisanship hurts your ability to conduct foreign policy?

A. I don't think there is an end to bipartisanship among the people. There may be among some of the political leaders. ■

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